

For Immediate Release
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Air District Alerts Residents to Summer Smog Hazards

Bay Area Launches "Spare the Air" Campaign on June 3

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. June 3, 2002 --- As summer starts to sizzle, Bay Area air quality officials are alerting residents to the increased potential for air pollution due to motor vehicle emissions combined with climatic conditions, and are urging them to modify their lifestyles to reduce the health risks posed by increased air pollution. Escalating summer temperatures, high pressure and low winds result in conditions that contribute to the production of ground-level ozone. These conditions lead to unhealthy air and increased risks for residents with heart and respiratory problems.

The Spare the Air season officially begins June 3 and runs through October 18th. Residents who are more vulnerable to air pollution include: **asthmatics** and those with respiratory and heart conditions, **children**, because they are more active outdoors and their lungs are still developing; **the elderly**, who are more sensitive to air pollution because they may have heart or lung disease; **people who exercise outdoors**.

Adverse Effects of Air Pollution

Following are some adverse effects of ground-level ozone, the most prevalent summer time air pollutant:

- Long-time repeated exposure to high concentrations of ozone may lead to reductions in lung function, inflammation of the lung lining and increased respiratory discomfort.
- Ground-level ozone exposure may lead to:
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chest pain when inhaling deeply
 - Wheezing and coughing
- Ground-level ozone also inflames and damages cells that line lungs, and aggravates asthma and chronic lung diseases, such as emphysema and bronchitis.

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Reducing Air Pollution for a Quality Summer

According to the Air District, the following are some ways to reduce air pollution in the Bay Area **on Spare the Air days**:

- Leave cars at home
- Carpool or use public transportation
- Don't use gasoline powered garden and utility equipment
- Avoid using consumer products that come in aerosol spray cans
- Refuel vehicles after sundown
- Use a chimney starter to light the barbecue or
- Use a gas barbecue

"What most people don't realize is that small changes can have huge positive effects on the air we breathe," said William Norton, Executive Officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "If just one person did not drive one day a week, in one year we would have 55 pounds less of air pollution."

Historically, air quality in the Bay Area has shown steady improvement over the past thirty years. Last year, the Spare the Air season ended with only one excess of the federal one-hour standard in the Bay Area --- the lowest number of excesses recorded since the Bay Area Management District began to monitor the air in the 1960's. However, there were 7 days over the federal eight-hour standard for ozone in 2001—a measure of longer-term exposure. And, there were 15 days last year when pollution levels violated the more stringent state health standards. Asthma, a disease exacerbated by air pollution, is still the number one cause of emergency room admissions at Children's Hospital Oakland.

"While air quality in the region has improved through the years, there is still a lot of work to be done to change people's behavior and lifestyle to improve air quality," said Norton, "We cannot let the ball drop now."

To sign up to receive health warnings via email and for air daily air quality readings and forecasts for the next day, visit the website www.sparetheair.org Air quality readings and forecasts are also available by phone at 1-800-HelpAir after 4 p.m.

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